

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, PRESIDENT ELECT OF THE UNITED STATES.



"Honest Old Abe," as the Americans call Lincoln, was originally a farm-labourer in Illinois. Frederick Douglas, "the little giant," his defeated antagonist, was a cabinet-maker.

We can in our own country, I know, point to instances of great judges, who have swept out offices; great generals, who have risen (socially) from the ranks; great poets, who have been ploughmen, or the sons of simple yeomen; and great college professors, who have been the sons of carpenters; but in America the instances are so frequent, that they scarcely attract attention. Up and down, men toss in that feverish seething sea of Transatlantic life, so that no one stares to hear that the new

inhabitant of the White House on the banks of the Potomac was once a woodcutter, any more than he would to see the wealthy merchant, with whom he dined last year in his splendid palace in the Fifth Avenue, stirring round oyster soup or "clam chowder" in a gilded refreshment cellar in the Broadway. Rising and falling are both very easy in America.

In one of his "stump speeches," when lately itinerating the north-west provinces, Frederick Douglas, after informing the crowd that he had first been a school teacher, and then a cabinetmaker, peculiarly skilful in the construction of bureaus and secretaries, and nearly as good at bedsteads and tables, went on to describe how, like Lincoln, he afterwards turned advocate, got into the Legislature, and eventually attained notoriety by his speeches on "squatter sovereignty," and the Kansas and Nebraska Bill. Having thus sketched himself as a self-made man, "the little giant" went on to praise "Old Abe" as one of those peculiar men who seemed to succeed with admirable skill in all that he undertook. He was the best teller of a story he (Douglas) knew. When he was younger he could throw any of the "boys" wrestling; he would outrun an Indian at a foot race; he pitched quoits truer and further; he was the luckiest tosser of a copper. He "could spoil more liquor than all the rowdies in the town put together," and the dignity and impartiality with which he presided at a horse-race, trotting-match, fist-fight, or rifle-match, excited the admiration and won the praise of everybody that was present. "

Old Abe is a gaunt giant more than six feet high, strong and long

limbed. He walks slow, and, like many thoughtful men (Wordsworth and Napoleon, for example), keeps his head inclined forward and downward. His hair is wiry black, his eyes are dark-grey; his smile is frank, sincere, and winning. Like most American gentlemen, he is loose and careless in dress, turns down his flapping white collars, and wears habitually what we consider evening dress. His head is massive, his brow full and wide, his nose large and fleshy, his mouth coarse and full; his eyes are sunken, his bronzed face is thin, and drawn down into strong corded lines, that disclose the machinery that moves the broad jaw.

This great leader of the "Republican" party —this Abolitionist — this terror of the "Democrats"— this honest old lawyer, with a face half Roman, half Indian, so wasted by climate, so scarred by a life's struggles, was born in 1809, in Kentucky. His grandfather, who came from Virginia, was killed by the Indians. His father died young, leaving a widow and several children. They removed to Indiana, Abe being at that time only six years old. Poor, and struggling, his mother could only afford him some eight months' rough schooling; and in the clearings of that new, unsettled country, the healthy stripling went to work to hew hickory and gum-trees, to grapple with remonstrating bears, and to look out for the too frequent rattlesnake. Tall, strong, lithe, and smiling, Abe toiled on as farm-labourer, mule-driver, sheep-feeder, deer-killer, woodcutter, and, lastly, as boatman on the waters of the Wabash and the Mississippi.

I, who have stood for hours and days watching the boatmen of these rivers, know how laborious is their life, — how hard they toil

to get their flat boats off the sand-bars, — how they moor at night among the fever-haunted cotton-trees, — how they kill the alligator, and make boots of his bossy skin, — how they spend hours under an almost African sun, dragging cotton bales down the steep earth banks, — how they have to gouge, and stab and shoot, to keep their own life and soul together, — what with the thievish "rowdies," the "river gamblers," and the rough backwoodsmen of Arkansas, Kansas, and Texas.

About 1830, Abe broke from this wild life, and went off to Illinois as field-labourer, first — then as shopman — lastly, by a natural American transition, as volunteer in the New Salem Company, bound for the war in Florida, against either Black Hawk, Billy Bowlegs, or some other desperate Indian chief determined to defend his cedar-trees, sand-plains, and marshes. This was the making of Abe. Daylight began to show: his staunchness, principle, energy, and sense soon made him a captain.

When the war was over, Abe returned to Springfield, the capital of Illinois, and resided in the plain two-storied white plank-house that he now lives in. In 1832 (for Abe was now a man of mark), he tried for a seat in the legislature, but failed. The year after, however, he was elected, and sat sturdily in the local parliament for four sessions.

Now, as you seldom meet an American who has tried less than four professions, Abe began next to study law, and his excellent head aiding him, he became an advocate, and practised with great

success at Springfield.

The old staunchness, the "duty-feeling," as the Germans call moral principle, was helping on old Abe, now in the court-room at Springfield, as it had done in the Indiana woods, and on the cotton-landings at Baton Rouge. Already an active politician, Lincoln now declared himself a Whig, and supported Henry Clay. In 1846, he got a step further on, and was elected for Congress, where sat till 1849. He became known there as a sturdy, dangerous Abolitionist, and on the Wilmot proviso he voted forty-two times (for the measure). A foe to popular cries and territorial aggression, he resisted Douglas, and opposed the Mexican war as unconstitutional.

In the years between 1849 and 1854, Lincoln retired from stump and platform and devoted himself to law. In 1854, as a Whig candidate for Illinois, he was defeated, but, like Sir John Moore, Abe's retreat ended in victory. In 1856 he took an active part for Fremont, and against Buchanan. In 1858 the Republicans of Illinois unanimously chose Abe as their candidate, and in a stumping tour he assailed his opponent Douglas on the squatter sovereignty question — pleading for abolition — but Douglas was nevertheless elected.

With these bold and honest antecedents, imagine the alarm and rage of the democrat "rowdies" on suddenly learning that the Chicago convention had nominated Old Abe, "the honest lawyer," as their Republican candidate for the President, that fiery Seward had waived his claims, and that Hannibal Hamlin of Maine, a clever,

business man, was to be the Republican Vice-President. Was it any wonder the "dead rabbits," the "shoulder hitters," the "plug-uglies," and the "rummies," in bar-room and ten-pin alley absolutely foamed at the mouth, as the adherents of such political clubs are apt to do? Was it any wonder that the "little giant" himself said at a great ox-roast in Jones's Wood near New York, that if "Lincoln shall attempt to subvert the constitution, violate its provisos, or make war upon the rights and interests of any section of this confederacy, I will aid to the full extent of my power in hanging him higher than Virginia hung John Brown." (Vociferous cheering and cries of "Bravo!")

No wonder the spindly trees and tawdry drinking sheds of Jones's Wood rang with cries of

"Good! "

"There's plenty of rope in New York!"

"Go it, Dug!"

"Sail in!"

"Let her rip!"

"That's the talk!"

"That's so!"

"Good for you!"

"Three cheers and a tiger for Dug the little giant!" Hei! hei! hei! hei!
UGH!

The windows in every city were full of political caricatures. Douglas riding on a rail — Abe splitting rails — Lincoln on a platform, and the "eternal nigger " grinning underneath. Out flew swarms of political song-books, virulent and venomous. The Republicans declared Douglas drank too much rye whiskey — the democrats laughed at Lincoln's first splitting rails, and then taking to splitting hairs. His friends said Lincoln could cut seven cord of wood in a day, that he repeated his prayers every night, that he was very like General Jack son, only his boots were a trifle larger. The democrats replied:

"Tell us any lies about the old rail-splitter, but don't show us his darned ugly picture, or we'll be sick — sure!"

Nothing could equal the absurdity and unconscious bathos of these Tyrtonises of party. The democrats, to the tune of "Gaily the Troubadour," sang:

"Gaily did Little Dug come from his home, While he was yet in youth not twenty-one, He joined our gallant band on the frontiers: Little Dug, Little Dug, give him three cheers."

They nicknamed the Abolitionists the "woollies," Lincoln the "rail member," and talked blasphemously about slavery as "an institution guarded by the records of the world, by the traditions of all mankind, by the logic of history, and the fitness of things." The "divinely instituted" and patriarchal system of slavery was perpetually preached up; and "nigger worship" decried as mining the South, and dissolving the Union, and hurrying on all parties to the "great irrepressible conflict."

Douglas "stumped" the States, and canvassed at every bar-room and liquor-store, let us remember. Lincoln remained quietly at home, abusing no one, and soliciting no popular applause. The Republicans — sanguine, high-spirited, and cool — exulted in "old honest Abe" and his long struggles when he lived in the old Kentucky cabin on the hills of Hardin county. "No robbing the treasury, now," they cried. "They would make the Locos run to slavish Cuba. Every honest poor man now would get his prairie-farm; they would crack 'the Soft Shells,' and send 50,000 'Wide-awakes' to guard Lincoln on his road to Washington." The election songs played all sorts of fantasias on the rail-splitting experience of Abe, garnishing their verses with technical allusions to please the backwoodsmen and wood-clearers of the North-West; for instance: —

"Tom Ewing boil'd de brackish water,
He drove faster than he oughter;
But Abe's de real ring-tail snorter.
A splittin' ob de rail, A splittin' ob de rail,

De ten-foot, white-oak rail.
He drove his glut right through the cut
With maul of hickory tough."

Torch-light processions now lit up the midnight of cities troubled in their sleep. Armies of the Republican Wide-awake clubs, in red oil-clothcaps, and carrying coloured lanthorns on poles, defiled down High-streets, making night hideous with noisy bands, discharge of cannon, fierce bonfires, and starry bursts of Roman candles.

In irritating violence, and readiness for bloodshed, there was not a pin to choose between either party. Lincoln objected to the Dred Scott decision, and declared the Missouri compromise unconstitutional. Mr. Somebody Wolf declared the negro was mere animated property, with triple-plated skull and a special strong smell. A quiet paper— "The Olive Branch" — writing on "Negro Equality," said: "White men, voters, see to this in time, and, voters, keep this taint, this blot, this degradation from your households and firesides — out-vote this detestable proposition of equality of races!"

Nor were the Republicans a whit behind.

Helper wrote: — "It is for you to decide whether we are to have justice peaceably or by violence, for, whatever consequences may follow, we are determined to have it one way or the other."

The religious "New York Tribune" calmly advised all Abolitionists to

deal no more with pro-slavery merchants; not to enter slave-waiting hotels; not to give fees to pro-slavery lawyers; not to call in pro-slavery physicians; not to listen to pro-slavery clergymen.

Mr. Joshua Giddings spoke of a time when Southern slave-holders would turn pale, and when they would "strike off the shackles of the slave, and, let me tell you that that time hastens — it is rolling forward."

The Hon. Erastus Hopkins said: — "If peaceful means fail us, and we are driven to the last extremity, when ballots are useless, then we will make bullets effective." O! ghost of Penn, only hear Erastus!

The great Helper book, which became an election pamphlet, and was most powerful for the Abolitionists, spoke of the number of slave-holders, and added: — "Against this army... we think it will be an easy matter, independent of the negroes, who, in nine cases out of ten, would be delighted with an opportunity to cut their masters' throats."

But most extreme and ferocious of all came that wolf Fenrir, the Hon. John S. Hale, of peaceful New Hampshire, who actually said, to the horror of the belligerent South: — "And if it comes to blood, let blood come. No, sir, if that come — must come — let it come, and it cannot come too soon, sir. Puritan blood has not always shrunk from such encounters; and when the war has been proclaimed with the knife — and the knife to the hilt, too — the steel has sometimes glistened in their hands."

But enough of such ill-timed and mischievous speeches; and, though we have purposely quoted only the words of influential men, let us remember that these harangues were uttered, and these books written, during a time of feverish excitement, and that they were peppered highly to rouse the appetite of the populace.

But one thing is remarkable during all the violence of this paper war, that not even the most venomous democratic tongue dared revile Lincoln. Men called him "rail splitter," and there was an end. They laughed at his age (only 51) and at his political defeats. They cried out that Doug was too "smart" for him. They said, "Let him split rails and split hairs, but not split the Union." They even growlingly allowed that he was honest. They dreaded, they confessed, to see raised the "black piratical flag" of war between free and slave labour, ending in the enslavement of the North. "This fanatical horde," they cried, "will goad the government to extreme measures. Give us Douglas, and down with Lincoln!"

In vain moderate men pointed out Lincoln's calm equality, and the probability that, as President, Abe would set his face against all violent measures, and practically, after so much opposition, do no more real harm than the much vituperated Van Buren did formerly.

Lincoln's speech upon his election confirms these philosophical opinions. "Let us," said the good man, for such I am sure he is, "let us at all times remember that all American citizens are holders of a common country, and should dwell together in the bonds of

fraternal feeling." — Immense applause, and cheers for half an hour, I dare swear. Mr. Lincoln will not, we must remember, become working President till some time in March next, so there is time to consider our verdict.

The other defeated candidates are soon dismissed. Douglas is a brilliant and not very high-principled demagogue. In many ways, talent excepted, he resembles Webster. He will doubtless run again as President. Bell, of Tennessee, is an old man, for quiet and union at all risks. Breckenridge is a young Kentucky gentleman of great promise, but too young for president. Lane is a nobody from outlying Oregon. Everett, the historian, is not publicly great. He always stood very low on the betting list.

Let us not rate Lincoln too high: a President has really not much motive power. He is not an originator; conscience and party keep him down; Abe will probably do nothing. If troubles run high, every one knows a popular war with Mexico, or with Spain for Cuba, would quiet them directly. Every sensible American feels that the north cannot do without the south, or the south without the north. One has money, the other cotton. The one is afraid to rebel, the other afraid to strike. The two parties are exactly in the absurd position of the poet in the old political epigram —

"The Earl of Chatham with his sword drawn,
Stood waiting for Sir Richard Vaughan.
Sir Richard, longing to get at 'em,
Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham."

Though slave-holding volunteers are drilling under the palmettos in Charleston, though Alabama buys powder, though Virginia collects muskets, and fiery South Carolina borrows cannon, I think no trouble will ensue just yet. The fire will smoke out; the prudent will spit and wait for Lincoln's first overt act. This may have large consequences. At present the cotton crop is just ready for selling, but I do think, as do wiser and more far seeing men than myself, that in the case of a second abolitionist President being elected, the South will lose all hope, get mad and desperate, and risk all in a blow at Northern Freedom.

Cunard.

Dec. 29, 1860. ONCE A WEEK.

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